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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2017 • ₹100

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The advent of a new year raises optimism and hope. It makes us look forward to a bright new future marked by new achievements, goals and milestones. The sentiment is contagious and more pronounced in the foodservice industry, the flag bearer of good cheer and conviviality. Understandably, the industry is looking to herald new beginnings and build on its past achievements.

The year gone by saw the food industry evolve further on many fronts. For one, technology saw greater adoption by restaurants, QSRs, cafés, pubs and lounges. Newer, edgier and cutting edge retail formats popped up, elbowing out tired themes. We also saw a surge in demand for new cuisines, concepts and food innovations. The trends will gather even greater momentum in the days ahead with a plethora of new age dishes, haute cuisines and even bolder and imaginative food concepts ready to spring.

At the forefront of this great culinary celebration will be the phalanx of forward thinking, avant garde chefs looking to launch fresh nouvelle cuisines that can get the taste buds slaving. Joining in this grand culinary odyssey will be a raft of new blue chip kitchen equipment, accessories and exotic ingredients. So expect to see more new recipes being conjured, more classic recipes getting a dust off, old menus being reincarnated in newer avatars, kitchens getting a facelift, more cookery shows on TV channels, chefs moving the creativity needle further and restaurateurs scrambling for newbie ideas that can turn their ventures into the proverbial Pied Piper.

To give you the real pulse of the food service industry in India and the many profound changes shaping its contours, leading HoReCa professionals from the country and abroad will gather at the upcoming Indian Food Service Forum, from 31st January to 2nd February in Mumbai. It will be interesting to hear them out on how they are leveraging industry trends across various formats and price points. Besides the Forum also gives you a chance to check out on new products and the latest technology solutions by experts, and meet potential business partners.



Amitabh Taneja

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Slurping on some good health

In a conversation with FoodService India, Amit Bajaj, Executive Chef, Indigo Delicatessen, talks about menu innovations and the potential of 'soups' in elevating the value proposition of the menu and the restaurant.

What are the hallmarks of the Indigo Deli brand, which sets it apart from other outlets in the same category?

The Indigo Deli brand attributes are being honest and unpretentious and serving good food cooked from the heart with local sustainable produce. The core of the brand lies in serving excellent food in a simplistic manner.

With respect to your format, how do you see it growing and evolving in the future?

The most interesting thing about Indigo Deli is that it has so much to offer. We cater to all age groups all through out the day. So anytime you walk into Indigo Deli you see kids with their parents enjoying a good meal, couples out on a date night or even a group of friends enjoying a drink or two at the end of a long day. So this is definitely a scalable and timeless format that we definitely see growing in the future.

What is the scope for packing more value proposition to this format?

The scope is tremendous and the concept is very lively. There is a lot happening each day. Especially in the festive months, there are new menu innovations. For instance, during Christmas, there was a special menu with some classic festive food

and cocktails, followed by some new things for the New Year – to ensure there is always something exciting brewing in our kitchen.

Which new experiments and innovations in F&B have you tried out and what has been the impact?

Experiments and innovations are a part of Indigo Deli's culture. Especially our 'Day Specials Menu', is a true celebration of seasons, local seasonal produce – often organic, local meats and seafood.

We feel it is our team's canvas to showcase their creativity and passion for the art of cooking and each Indigo Deli comes up with one's own Day Special Menu – similar as far as styles go, but distinctly different in content!

Recently, we also hosted an exclusive 20 diners only Chefs Table where we created a four course alcohol infused menu right from the soup up until the dessert. It was a quite challenging menu and we received a good response.

Which are those cutting edge concepts and innovations that you feel are truly unique to your establishment?

We hire passionate people and then teach them the art of cooking and serving. Indigo Deli has



always changed with changing times. Food concepts such as Special's menu, all day dining, healthy food, supporting local produce and maximum use of seasonal ingredients have been the USP of our restaurants.

What measures have you put in place for disciplined kitchen operations and for controlling food cost?

Each restaurant of ours is manned by an experienced Sous Chef, who works closely with us on all aspects. The opening and the closing checklist are a must for all chefs, and involves inspection of all the sections daily. The chefs conduct training at regular intervals for both the front as well as the back of the house to ensure optimum cost effectiveness as well as wastage management.

Another very important aspect we follow closely is standardization of the common recipes to ensure maximum control on the food cost.

What initiatives have you taken to reduce food wastage?

Planning is a critical aspect in controlling food wastage. The recipes are standardized, documented and taught to each and every member. The team is trained well and educated about food wastage.

Breakfast has come to be reinvented as a snack. What has been your approach to this emerging trend?

Breakfast is the most important meal and to promote that we serve breakfast all day long at Indigo Deli. A lot of our new menus revolve around breakfast and keeping this in mind we have also curated special menus like 'eggs from heaven – a special eggs only breakfast menu' and 'marathoners breakfast – a healthy /high protein breakfast menu specially for runners preparing for marathons', both of which were very well appreciated and we really saw guests coming repeatedly for the same.

As a chef of an establishment famous for its lighter offerings, how would you rate the potential of 'soups' in elevating the value proposition of the menu and the restaurant?

Soup is something that is a very important part of Indigo Deli's menu. At the Deli, the soups are changed every day. They range from a seasonal vegetable broth to even a seafood bisque or chowder for that matter. The soup becomes a meal in itself when it is nice and wholesome.

Which new flavours, recipes and other trends would you like to point out with respect to the soup category?

Smoked soups are in trend. India being a tropical country, cold soups have gained a lot of interest and are included in various menu structures.

What do you consider your proudest accomplishment in your career so far?

There are many moments of pride in the short life as a chef, but nothing is as important as being given the charge to head the most proficient brand in India.

What have been your major learnings?

Being consistent, efficient and knowing your true strengths. ●●

Soup is something that is a very important part of Indigo Deli's menu. The soups are changed every day and range from a seasonal vegetable broth to even a seafood bisque or chowder.

Designing Restaurants for an immersive experience

by Amit Aurora and Rahul Bansal

The experience of restaurants isn't just about food and what's on the plate. Your experience that is also guided by good service and increasingly, good atmosphere. This atmosphere is delivered by how multiple factors, including interior decor, lighting and services all combine to deliver an immersive experience.

We may need to eat to survive, but dining out is not about the need for nourishment, rather it is food for the soul. As affluence and professional pressures overtake daily life, the experience of restaurants are about so much more than just what's on the plate - it is guided by good service and increasingly, good atmosphere. This atmosphere is delivered by how multiple factors, including interior decor, lighting and services all combine to deliver an immersive experience.

The restaurant's overall theme is the starting point for achieving a quality space. Along with the spatial context and constraints, this forms the basis of every decision that contributes to the design language. Every level of design is informed by and contributes to the layering of the theme.

Starting with the entrance and percolating down to the tiniest detail, a restaurant must reflect the unique character of the owners. This becomes even more important when designing for a specific cuisine or for a target customer.

Certain cuisines evoke associated imagery and very specific details must be correct to complete the fantasy setting of the food. In the case of a target audience, it becomes relevant to anticipate exactly what will appeal to them and how that can be achieved.

Set in the heart of New Delhi, Amour bistro is crafted with an intent of creating a native, effortless ambience that is unaffected by the surrounding urban chaos. The restaurant's look is manifested through a wild mix of urban pulse and human warmth, while preserving the cozy character of a European street cafe. With

the design intent of a combination of simplistic, minimal elements and earthy tones that endow the space with an elegant dining environ, Amour is representative of purity and integrity and an amalgam of tradition and modernity. The maximized glazing acts as a layer to let the restaurant function seamlessly through all seasons, allowing visitors to enjoy each space in year-round weather conditions. An open space philosophy is adopted for the space planning for the interiors, to enable space efficiency and the creation of an orderly seating plan.

In the case of Town Hall, the location of the restaurant helped create the theme of the restaurant. Located in the middle of the central wing of the gentrified Khan Market, the shell of the building was distinctly colonial, built as part of the rebuilding of New Delhi by Edwin Lutyens. This heritage was carried through to the interiors, with the various elements like the furniture, flooring and wall detailing all contributing towards imparting a period ambience. Even small details, like the ability for diners to control the lighting at their table is a nod to the colonial heritage of the era.

Backyard, as the name suggests, is meant to convey the ambience of a casual gathering in a domestic setting. Set in lots of open area underlaid with loose gravel, the principal design element is the connection of the indoors and outdoors, underscoring the sensation of walking through a house to discover your friends having a good time in the back.

As standards of safety and fire protection are becoming more stringent, the increasingly complex web of services and amenities must be designed to work hand in hand. Kitchens need detailed design for clearing air through exhausts,





It is essential to create an atmosphere around the theme that allows the diner a temporary suspension of disbelief - a short journey of fantasy into the perfection of a good meal in a great place.

maintaining hygiene through ease of cleanliness and ensuring quality of food held in storage. Audio and projection technology has become both simple and complex, requiring fewer components to produce great quality sound, but needing more intelligent coordination with other interior services. Speed of evacuation is another important factor to be considered and all these systems need to work in conjunction with the overall design of the spaces, affording adequate movement in both the served and service areas.

Unlike restaurants of the past that focussed only on fixed meal times, modern restaurants tend to be frequented by customers during any part of the day. It is not uncommon to plan for breakfast meetings, brunches, or the ever ubiquitous coffee breaks that stretch to include a meal. Occasionally, professionals will use restaurants as work spaces to meet clients, brainstorm with teams or simply to get concentrated work done. Thus, it becomes critical to introduce natural lighting into the space. Sunlight imbues restaurants with a fresh lightness that is essential to daytime entertaining, with lighting used only to attenuate the natural movement of light through the space. As the day

progresses, warmer lighting can work with the setting sun to create the ambience best suited for the coffee or the sundowner, as the case may be.

Lighting also forms a crucial part to creating the overall ambience of a restaurant. Warmer tones create mellow, casual spaces while white fluorescent lighting creates a bright, clean feeling. The environmental impact of choosing the correct light fixtures and fittings cannot be undermined, with modern LED luminaires consuming a small percentage of the electricity that halogens or incandescent bulbs consume.

Conclusively, **the experience of a customer is the ultimate test for the design of a restaurant. Just as the use of a panoply of contrived surface textures and materials, like imitation wallpaper cannot create a believable setting, a truly immersive experience can only be created by using authentic materials with real detailing.** Simply serving up the perfect plate every time is no guarantee of success, as the actual food is now only part of the overall experience delivered. It is essential to create an atmosphere around the theme that allows the diner a temporary suspension of disbelief - a short journey of fantasy into the perfection of a good meal in a great place. ●●



Aurora (left) and Bansal are Partners, DCA Architects, an integrated design solutions firm that provides services in Architecture, Interior Design and Design Coordination across a wide range of building types including Offices, Residential, Retail/ Luxury retail, Hospitality.



Little & Often

Germany is the champion of Europe when it comes to snacking. Irrespective of age or gender, snacks are consumed with relish and ever increasing frequency. Nor does it matter too much, if the snack costs a little more – providing the quality and originality justify it.

It is the beginning of September in a hotel at Frankfurt Airport. Representatives of the restaurant trade and from industry meet up at the annual specialist congress 'snack 2016'. Organised by the dfv Conference Group, it is a favourite rendezvous at which to get information on the latest trends and to establish new contacts. Consumer market researcher, Jochen Pinsker from the npdgroup, Germany, is one of the speakers and reports on the latest findings in this field.

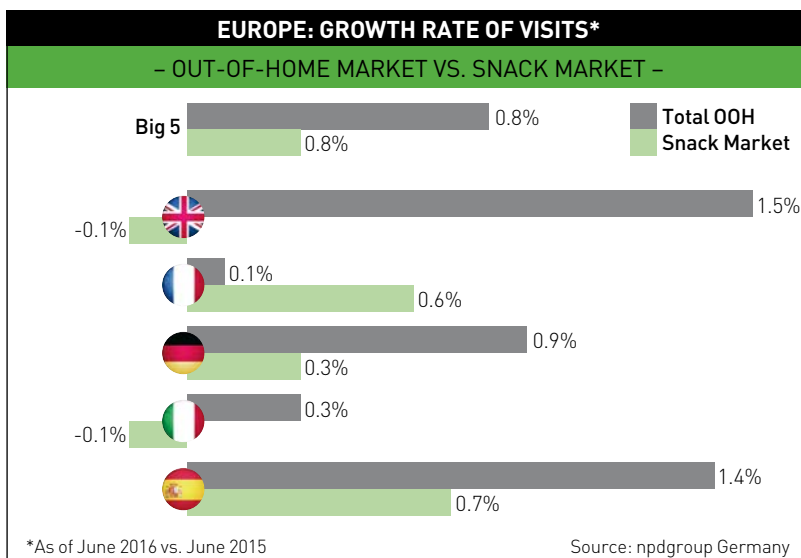
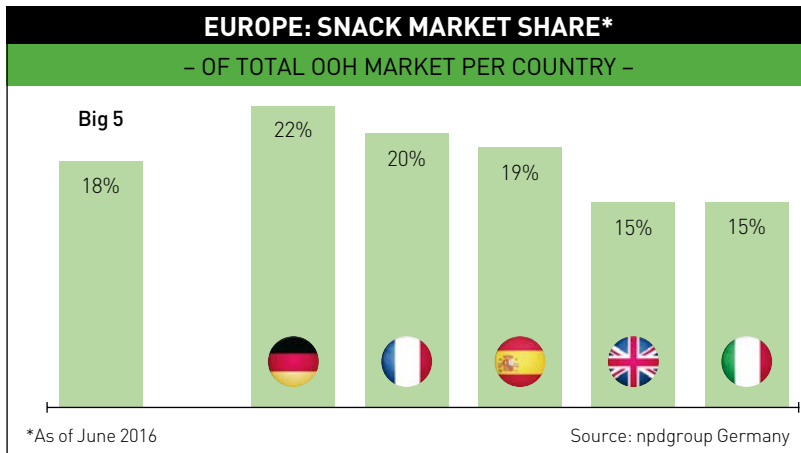
In order to give respondents an unambiguous definition of what, exactly, is meant by a 'snack', the questionnaire speaks of "ready prepared products to be consumed immediately". During the analysis stage, further distinctions are drawn, taking into account where the snacks are consumed (food to-go), the type of product and the time of day (between meals).

Let us look first at Germany: there, it is bakers that dominate the snacks market and they have continued to prosper over the past few years. With 27.5% of visits, they have snatched market share from the burger restaurants (18.2%, following 19.5% in 2010). In third place are the supermarkets. Altogether, only three of the ten segments identified have managed to noteworthy improve (see graph).

The composition and order of the top 10 snack products (based on the number of individual items sold) has hardly changed in the past few years (see table). The only thing that is really new in the list of the top ten is the rise of the lye bread pretzels, which takes them to second place amongst the top 10 growth products [also ranked by number of individual items sold].

Insights into the future of the German snack market can almost certainly be transferred to the rest of Europe. There are few negative influences; though, like the retail trade, the snacks business, too, is suffering as a result of increased online shopping. Logic tells us that a quick cappuccino or a cheese roll between visits to one shop and the next just can't happen if customers are shopping at home on the sofa.

But the positive influences impacting the development of the snack market outweigh the negative ones. More and more women work full

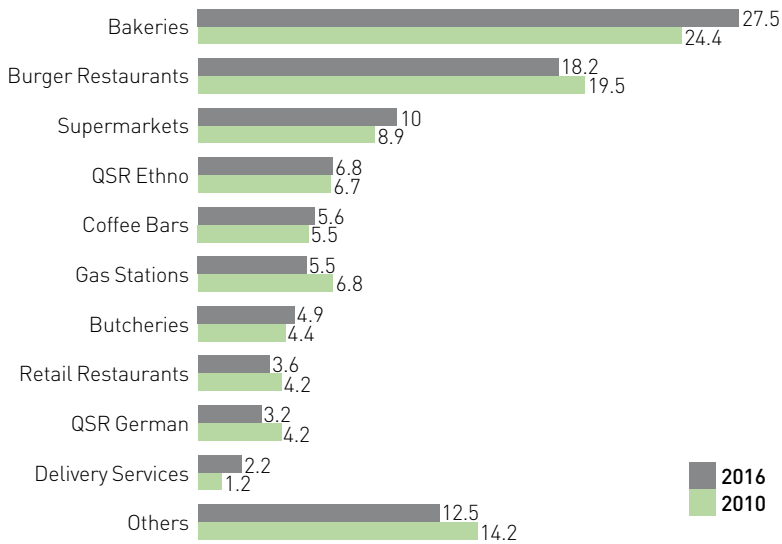




Brezen Kolb, Nuremberg, Germany

GERMANY: BAKERIES DOMINATE THE SNACK MARKET

- MARKET SHARE BY SEGMENT IN THE FAST-FOOD SECTOR - VISITS IN % -



Source: npdgroup Germany

time and travel around in their job, and they are often going to want a healthy and varied range of snacks available. The proportion of the over fifties continues to increase – people retiring today are often enterprising and in good health – so that they too represent a growing target group. Equally promising is that, as people have less and less time and move around more and more, snacks often remain the only way of feeding oneself.

Snacking in the rest of Europe

Every day, the 'Big 5' in Europe (UK, D, F, E, I) spend almost €150 m on snacks. That represents €53 bn in the last twelve months. This money is spent in the course of a total of 18.4 bn visits, which gives an average bill of €2.90 per visit. On average, in Europe's 'Big 5', 18% of total spend in the away-from-home market goes on snacks – which means that, at 22%, more snacking goes on in Germany than in any of the other four countries looked at.

It is also worth comparing the development of the snacking market with that of the away-from-home market as a whole. On average, in the 'Big 5', both segments have remained stable with a slight upward trend. Only in France has the snacking market shown better growth than the restaurant segment. ●●



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What's in store?

by Nivedita Jayaram Pawar

For the Indian restaurant industry, 2016 was the year of sriracha, clean eating, gluten-free dishes and, of course, uber-elaborate cocktails. As we turn the page on 365 days of great meals, here's what industry leaders from across the country have to say about 2017. The overarching theme? The continuing shift toward more affordable, more intimate, more collaborative dining experiences. If all of it come true, we might have a lot to look forward to...



Mariketty Grana

Owner and Head Chef at
Thalassa Mumbai and Goa

It's an exciting time to be a restaurateur! The Indian palate is evolving and people are being more adventurous, experimental, and willing to try new cuisines.

What's new

There's no denying that the artisanal food market is booming. From the increase in small, niche brands on supermarket shelves over the past year to the emergence and almost immediate success of niche food delivery businesses. Farmers' market and farm to fork, though niche, will most likely remain away from mainstream as the logistics of it on a large scale are rarely profitable and trying to make it mainstream usually dilutes the concept and takes away from its charm. Food trucks, on the other hand, being mobile and city friendly seem very viable. They keep your rental costs down and are both fun and unique.

Customization rules

Guests have always been inclined to customize their food. The trend of making your own pizza, though, is gone...who wants to go out for dinner after a long, hard day of work and instead of unwinding with friends over a delicious meal and a glass of wine, make their own pizza or roll their own sushi?

More often than not, when people go out to eat what they count on is good service, and they look for convenience. They like that someone is taking the time to cater to their needs.

Impact of technology on food service operations

Technology has touched every facet of our lives. We are getting more curious about our food - where it comes from, how it's made, where it grows, how it affects our world, and how technology is changing it. It's been changing our food for decades with modern agriculture tools and genetically engineered produce. Around 70 per cent of calories are from processed food. Technology

has changed food for the better too. It not just feeds nine billion people, it also offers new ways to grow food as we face a future of changing climate. Hydroponics, aeroponics, vertical and urban farming, and lab-grown foods are all driving big changes.

Also, with the arrival of mobile phones, online reservations, social media and new payment methods, technology has infiltrated the food and restaurant industry like never before. Most serve to improve the experience – both for the industry and for the patron. Yet with every new advance comes a new challenge. **It's how we deal with these advances and the challenges that accompany them that will determine the fate of many restaurants, regardless of what's on the menu.** Social networking sites have played a huge role in shaping people's opinions of dining establishments. Customers can voice their opinions on a restaurant – good or bad – when they check-in. They can influence a lot of users with just one update. That's just the tip of the iceberg though. That being said, when the reviews are good it drives business too.

Technology has never been more intuitive than it is today, and it's only getting better. It allows restaurant patrons to find restaurants,



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rate them, and decide where they want to spend their hard-earned money when they go out to eat. It allows restaurant owners to be more efficient and effective in the areas they feel can be streamlined by hardware and software. But if used in the wrong place and at the wrong time, it can do a restaurant great harm – as it can with any industry.

What's next...

Good food will always remain the main factor that brings guests to the table again and again. If good food can be presented brilliantly, it would simply complete the package. With advanced equipment and food prepared at a higher-quality, restaurants can move from boring menu offerings and styles of service to innovative ones, after all, that's where

Hydroponics, aeroponics, vertical and urban farming, and lab-grown foods are all driving big changes.



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Failing to put systems in place is one of the biggest mistakes independent restaurant owners make. Organization doesn't kill the flow of creativity. Putting outstanding systems in place gives you the freedom to be creative.



all creativity takes place. Open kitchens, cooking on the table, etc are some concepts that will make eating out interesting. Not having charging ports for customer's phones, cameras, tablets or laptops it will be huge thumbs down. Travellers and visitors expect these services as they are more often than not on the run and they would like to keep their gadgets charged.

If you have got a great menu, why not get an app! Restaurants are switching to apps displaying the best of what they offer. Allowing consumers to get first-hand knowledge of what the restaurant is all about, and customizing food. The ability to order and pay for their food online is now the trend.

Local touch tends to be a big hit too when restaurants showcase regional architecture with authenticity. This brings people closer to understanding the local culture and cuisine.

The cornerstones of a great restaurant

No restaurant succeeds without a great chef, a great location and a great concept. They all work together. Location should fit your concept. Your chef, or "talent," must fit your concept. Some entrepreneurs say, "Well, location doesn't matter because I'm going to create a destination restaurant." In my experience, people say that when they have a bad location. It's hard to become a destination if you don't start with a great location. Accessibility is everything!

If you exhaust your decision-making capacity with unnecessary choices, you'll end up making mistakes when it really matters. It's important to set goals, both specific and long-term.

It's good for an organization to allow people to participate and express their views. Organizations work better if employees have more autonomy without decentralizing authority.

Always overestimate your capital needs. A lot of restaurant owners start out with cash in reserve and start blowing it because they think the rosy phase will last forever. That's why most restaurants go out of business. Never let the initial success go to your head. Success is only determined years later.

Love teaching people. I often bring in people from different places, including interns from culinary schools. I don't work in the kitchen much nowadays but I do get to teach people and that's incredibly rewarding. It breeds mentoring and camaraderie between the team and sometimes the competition brings out creativity.

Never be cheap where guests are concerned. The most important money you spend is money that adds value to the guest.

Failing to put systems in place is one of the biggest mistakes independent restaurant owners make. Organization doesn't kill the flow of creativity. Putting outstanding systems in place gives you the freedom to be creative.

Be ready to evolve, especially if you're a chef. Many businesses are started by a craftsman with an idea. Rarely does that idea become anything unless that person partners with



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INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

someone with a complementary ability. That's when an idea becomes a business.

Reduce costs and cut waste

Reducing food waste cuts back on the strain of a restaurant's bottom line. It also has the potential to improve customer relations and build a more environmentally responsible company culture.

The main factor in making waste reduction work is staff and customer involvement. **The best way to reduce the amount of waste a restaurant produces is by conducting a waste audit. Waste audits allow you to physically see what waste is being produced in your restaurant.** It is a somewhat unpleasant experience, but a very valuable tool in reducing waste.

Creating a team responsible for managing the waste and waste training will be an essential part of successful waste reduction programs.

Recycling does not come naturally for many people and may even have cultural hurdles. Integrating waste reduction and pictorial recycling guides into all training programs will go a long way.

Most important, the reuse option in food service is food donation. Thousands of organizations across the country are eager to accept all sorts of donations including old equipment. Plus the donations go to a great cause.

Use reusable options with everything possible — coffee filters, coffee cups, drink coasters, etc. Discontinue the use of any non-essential products like paper mats, frilly toothpicks, etc.



The rise of smaller, more cuisine-focused restaurants

It's expensive to make food well, to foster an environment where waiters, cooks, and busboys are fairly compensated, and to source from local farms that practice good land stewardship. And it's difficult to provide a quality product—antibiotic and hormone-free dairy, organic produce—when there's constant pressure to create cheaper food options, because ultimately restaurants and retailers are still competing for the consumer based on price, which doesn't exactly reward best business practices. The fast food industry will lean towards automation of course but what it really comes down to is this: we as a society have to choose what we value in our food.



Karyna Bajaj
Executive Director at
KA Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.

Restaurant trends to watch out for

For luxury restaurants "upping" the customer experience, focusing on customer touch points and giving personalized service basis their preferences will be the focal point in 2017. It helps create that positively surprised experience for everyone that walks in to the restaurant. For QSR and other food retail formats, it's really moving towards taking good locally sourced product and making it shine in its true form. I also believe regional food from different territories in India is going to become a focal point for new or existing restaurants.

Comfort food will continue to rule as people want to go back to their roots. Simple, traditional items will be given a sophisticated makeover by way of big-ticket ingredients or inventive presentation.

While customization will be the buzzword in 2017, there will be a large number of people still opting for a menu curated by the restaurant.

I think the speed at which we are evolving in the F&B industry, people are very sure about what exactly they want and where they want to eat and by virtue of that knowledge and accuracy, **more cuisine focused restaurants instead of multi-cuisine will be the focus of the future.** I'm not necessarily sure if it will be directly related to real estate and labour and food costs as at the end of the day we are here to serve people and give them what they want.

Relationship management to be the key

Efficient kitchens, faster foodservice, value for menu and a great menu is hygiene for restaurants. **But I believe it will be relationship management that will drive customers to a particular restaurant.** Maintaining and creating relationships with customers allows you to interact with them, provide them with an excellent experience and further build their loyalty to the brand.

Understanding customer preferences by way of noting it down and then providing that personalized service to them when they return will not just positively surprise them but also ultimately increase the stickiness to restaurants, hence making the business more consumer intelligent.

Tech in the restaurant business

There is nothing wrong in going down the technological route of providing tablets as menus for orders. Customers can browse the digital menu with High Definition images of menu items, description of item, key ingredients etc. and also place order from the digital menu. However, I feel there is a sort of charm and mystery behind going to a restaurant and leaving the culinary expertise to them which can sometimes get lost when a restaurant is pushing too much information your way.

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Trends to watch out for

2017 will be the year of regional food. In a bid to re-discover their heritage, people are shifting to regional food in restaurants and during social events.

Lesser known cuisines like Saoji food from Nagpur, Karwari food from Karnataka and Gadwali food are already becoming popular but with the right push like pop ups they can soar.

I think the trend will continue to move toward people being able to dine in a more casual and relaxed environment with a user-friendly price point, but be able to expect a higher quality of product offered at reasonable prices. I believe people enjoy that – fine dining experiences in a relaxed setting.

Value for money is priority number one for any successful dining experience. With diners looking for the very best in produce as well as value, this can be a tricky balance to get right. Achieving value for money doesn't always mean the highest quality, or selling expensive items cheaply to bring in customers – that's disastrous in the long run. To strike a balance restaurants must know where to invest and where to be economical. Planning and procurement processes need to be tight to deliver the best value for money.

Customization will continue to rule. Diners don't want to break their healthy lifestyle to enjoy a night out. **And with so many food based lifestyles like veganism, clean eating, gluten free, vegaquarian, low carb or countless others, restaurants with options that cater to these diners will reap the rewards.** Diners will expect to be able to customise a meal to meet their needs, so flexibility is key. Studies show that diners are willing to pay more for healthier foods, so catering to these expectations can be very beneficial. Also, from a chef's point of view, there is a high level trust and surrender. Guests come back for the food served by the chef of a particular restaurant.

Artisanal products will become a cue for quality. **In a time when many people feel increasingly distant from the means of production for what they eat, artisan foods carry inherent value by granting consumers an opportunity to know where their food comes from, to see the hands that made it and to understand how it is made.** Rustic, small-batches, hand-crafted are the new desirable attributes.

Innovation is key

In the restaurant industry, innovation is a prerequisite for success. If you don't stay on the edge of that curve, you become yesterday's news pretty fast. You need to innovate and upgrade your restaurant without disrupting your business or losing features that your customers value. Renovate and innovate, but keep the popular items intact while making the improvements. The key is to not overly interrupt the guest experience.

Staff training

No one can deny the importance of ongoing staff training. Whether it is for veteran staff or new hires, training is one of the most important practices in any restaurant. Training ensures your employees know what's expected of them and how to do it, which are two essential elements to having a successful and happy workforce. Well, having well-trained employees increases customer satisfaction and ensures repeat visits.

Reduce costs and cut waste

This can be done by engaging energy saving devices, labour saving techniques, cooking in small batches, forecasting sales, smart sourcing, better menu planning (i.e root to leaf cooking), etc.



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For QSR and other food retail formats, it's really moving towards taking good locally sourced product and making it shine in its true form.

Food trends to watch out for

The focus will be on global cuisine with a distinctly Indian touch. Like a “glocal” flavor – something international meshed with traditional –domestic ingredients to create a new and unique profile.

Vegetables will continue its rise on the dinner plate, as animal proteins and heavy side dishes make way for more vegetarian options. But these will be steamed, grilled and sautéed.

Presentation will hold centrestage as today, customer satisfaction goes beyond the taste of your menu items or the attentiveness of your service. Regardless of the type of restaurant you operate, diners now expect an alluring presentation of their meals.

Portion sizes will veer towards medium to small as customers want small plates to share with friends. The food should be fast and not fill them up.

Customisation will come to the fore, as customers want more control over their own food. And why not, right? After all, they are paying for it, therefore they should have exactly what they want.

Cherished family recipes will soon be appearing on a menu near you. Expect to see dishes straight from Grandma’s recipe box, or cuisines built from Grandma’s recipes tweaked with the latest cooking trends.

With growing competition and the opening of new outlets every day, customer relationship is now one of the key drivers alongside aggressive marketing and using social and other media. The corporate world is slowly chucking out the home food “dabba” and going for healthy, quick and value-for- money meals at nearby restaurants. Hence efficiency and quick service is now a necessity.

Going ahead, the emphasis will be on service that is quick, courteous and friendly, not obsequious. “Deals” for special occasions, weekends, get-togethers and other ‘flash’ benefits will be on the rise to woo customers through mobile apps, area specific messaging and on the spot discounts and sops. Delivery orders will take precedence.

The focus will be on ingredients rather than the cuisine. Ingredient based menu designing is the norm now with a focus towards comfort food served in a modern way. **“Fine dine” restaurants, which are capex heavy, are definitely on the way out. Local ingredients which are cheaper and fresher will be used more and more.** ••

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Innovating with the times

by AS Iyer



Home chef entrepreneur Lolita Sarkar gets candid about what's likely to trend in the new year and what it means for restaurants that ultimately serve the locals with a palate that still remains dominantly 'Indian'.



Lolita Sarkar and her husband Amitabh Sinha

Home chef entrepreneur Lolita Sarkar and her husband Amitabh Sinha together launched Desi Deli in Mumbai's hotspot Bandra a year and a half ago. The venture brought them into the spotlight for their hot dogs and burgers. Enthused, they went on to open another outlet in the Mumbai's western suburbs Andheri towards the end of 2016.

Here's Lolita, the Creative Chef and Director, Desi Deli, diving into a conversation about gastronomy and the food concepts she is betting on to turn hot this year.

NEW PATHS

Venturing on a new path, Lolita says, is always an exciting experience. "These have been the days of great learning and sharing the joys of people enjoying our cuisine and menu." Choosing Andheri as the next destination for Desi Deli was a decision made after considering a variety of factors. The high footfall in the region is one of the major reasons. Lolita says, "It made good sense to give the brand visibility locally at least upto Juhu; and south city-folk venturing through Bandra."

Launching the Andheri outlet also meant bringing in new ideas and experimenting. This gave birth to the new section on their menu card – small eats and light and easy drinking options. Lolita explains that since they serve beer and wine at the new outlet, an added pleasure to go with good food, eating patterns change accordingly. "As the approach to food changes with drinks, we tried to amalgamate some seriously delicious food ideas fashioned as 'small eats'. Small eats allow for fun experimentation and give us a chance to freely play with interesting ideas. Also, this decision was taken keeping in

mind that 'small eats' are enroute to becoming trendsetters!"

LOOKING FORWARD

As each year means a new trend comes into play and there's a new approach and probable change in perspective. Lolita believes that food trends in the overall food and hospitality industry applies to Desi Deli in a much more smaller, nevertheless focused way, since they are developing a concept. She believes that a product in the food and drinking space, which among other things, ensures that "food is first in the equation to provide you with a place and a time, where one can enjoy eating and drinking. And then there is the impulsive snack, the desire to treat oneself and friends. Many strategies emerge for designing the nuances of such a product and experience. So our focus is food first and customer first."

Lolita explains what recent trends like Molecular gastronomy was like – "an attempt to exploit the chef's creative skills and tweak it with a chemical magical approach. Only in the hands of truly inspired chefs did this work at the level of food, but it always worked as drama. This brings attention to the eating experience. But in the end, variety, high quality, and the customers' ability to make choices, will be what matters."

That said, she says that the local palate and trends could at times be much different than what is happening globally. However, the bottom line of her approach at Desi Deli is simple: "Listen to the world for ideas and figure out how to blend it to make it work for the Indian palate." This means that the focus majorly remains on redesigning the recipes or 're-recipeing' as Lolita terms it. But she insists, "We're not trying to make fusion. We're trying to give it an obvious context – our palate. We'll be concentrating on hearty



robust foods – local, street options with surprising accompaniments. We're always excited to design small eats. We also enjoy curating low alcohol cocktails in beer and wines, which will be a big trend with us this year."

KEEPING UP

One of the main sales points for most food outlets in Andheri continues to be 'lunch' given the plethora of corporate and production company offices there. Lolita too admits to be working on lunch menus that will keep their approach alive so that the diners can enjoy the Desi Deli food in an 'out-of-café' experience. Although she clarifies that Desi Deli food works across the day, including a separate exotic breakfast menu on weekends. "We do not concentrate on lunch in particular. Our menu has been slightly added to and a few items have been removed. We have revised our menu once, and that menu applies to Andheri too."

Their overall approach, nonetheless, is likely to throw up new challenges and trends. Lolita confides, "as an example, pickles and ferments are expected to be all the rage and we are known for our concentration of relishes, mustards, chutneys and sauces. Oozy gooey, juicy dishes are expected to trend; and we make juicy burgers and hot dogs!" And to make the lunches an even bigger hit, they have introduced a 'lucky lunch offer' where diners



get a little more for a little less. "This applies to working lunches in particular, and our work day deliveries are increasing," she says.

Lolita adds that they overhaul their menu about twice a year, not including specials for Christmas, other festivities, seasonal inclusions, and so on. She says, "Andheri's launch and introducing alcohol made us innovate yet again. But basically you never know when a new great idea may come up. Specials are a great way to know whether to make something permanent on the menu. It's quite easy to review sales through the billing system to understand what dish stands on its own legs." ••

As the approach to food changes with drinks, we tried to amalgamate some seriously delicious food ideas fashioned as 'small eats'.

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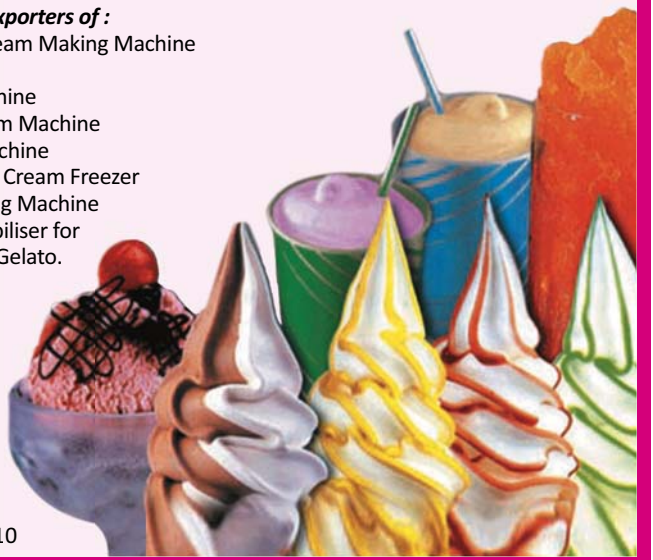
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Gazing into the future of foodservice in India

The industry is expected to get more competitive this year. Here are some trends that will shape the food service industry in India in the years to come.

by Venkatesh Iyer



The extremely competitive food industry of India has shown us time and again the significance of innovation. From a Filter Coffee to Espresso & Latte or from Cutting Chai to Detox Flavoured Teas, from a simple Vadapav to a range of Vadapav variants, we have been spoiled for choices.

The year 2015 belonged to food tech startups in many ways. Players like Zomato, Food Panda, Swiggy, Runnr raised massive funding at attractive valuations but the party didn't last long and soon the sector began to crumble in the second half of 2015 impacting the investment climate throughout 2016. Some startups were scaled down, some other shut down, while a few were absorbed by larger players backed by deep pocket investors. However, green shoots started appearing in the second half of 2016 with food tech startups like Mr Hot, Idea Chakki, Monkey Box and YumLane raising funds from marquee investors like Ratan Tata, Binny Bansal, Blume Ventures and crowd funding platform IvyCamp.

The QSR market in India is expected to touch \$4.1 billion by 2020, according to a report by CyberMedia Research. The report also points out that QSR is the fastest growing segment in the Indian food service industry. According to a report by Traxcn, there are close to 200 food ordering and delivery startups in India. Hence, the way forward in 2017 is only going to get more competitive. Here are some trends that will shape the food service industry in India in the coming years.

Real Food: One trend that has been building up over the years is the need for hygienic eating, or food made with ingredients that are free of additives, antibiotics, and other artificial components. But the 'real food' concept goes beyond – it includes adding the authenticity of local ingredients. **The formats selling authentic Indian food with a twist are likely to acquire customers faster than the ones doling out discounts on every order and burning cash to maintain market share.**

New Definition of Healthy: What is really interesting to note is that the traditional definition of 'healthy' food is changing with time. While once 'being healthy' was all about cutting calories and

adding salads to the menu, it now revolves around transparency of the production chain which is of utmost importance. **In the ever-evolving digital era, food chains and food brands are on their toes round the clock to take action before they are called out for.** The QSRs also have to maintain a standardised taste and unit economics if they have the ambition to become a pan India player.

Ethnic Modern Blends: The QSR sector has always managed to woo the customers by adding 'n' number of variations to simple food. **This trend will get more exciting with introduction of more ethnic flavours with modern food plating.** For instance, the popular chicken nuggets gets a vegetarian twist with achari nuggets.

Tech Savvy Ordering: The newest entrant in QSR industry in 2016 was the concept of Online Ordering – this trend will continue to offer a big opportunity for restaurants, both in terms of customer service and behind the scenes. Ordering via mobile app gives restaurants an insight on customer data, to keep a track on most loving recipe on your menu real time, and delivers orders directly to the kitchen, cutting out the middle man. **As mobile and online ordering increase, in-store tablets may become more seamlessly integrated and accepted as part of the fast-food experience.**

Bowl-ing!: Choose your choice of veggies and sauces and make your own salad bowl. In 2017 this trend looks promising for customised meal options. For instance, choosing a customised meal to make your own Yoghurt bowl topped with your choice of sprinklers and toppings. It's a lot easier and faster to assemble a bowl than plated upscale entrees. **Indian consumers are becoming more open to DIY concepts. The restaurants and QSRs should add more DIY items on their menu to drive sales.**

While these trends are likely to rock 2017, companies in QSR segment – be it a food tech or any other form of food service – will still have to work around the challenges like maintaining unit economics, not losing money on every order, undertake sensible expansion strategy and ofcourse start making some real money. ••

The author is the Co-founder & CEO of Goli Vadapav.



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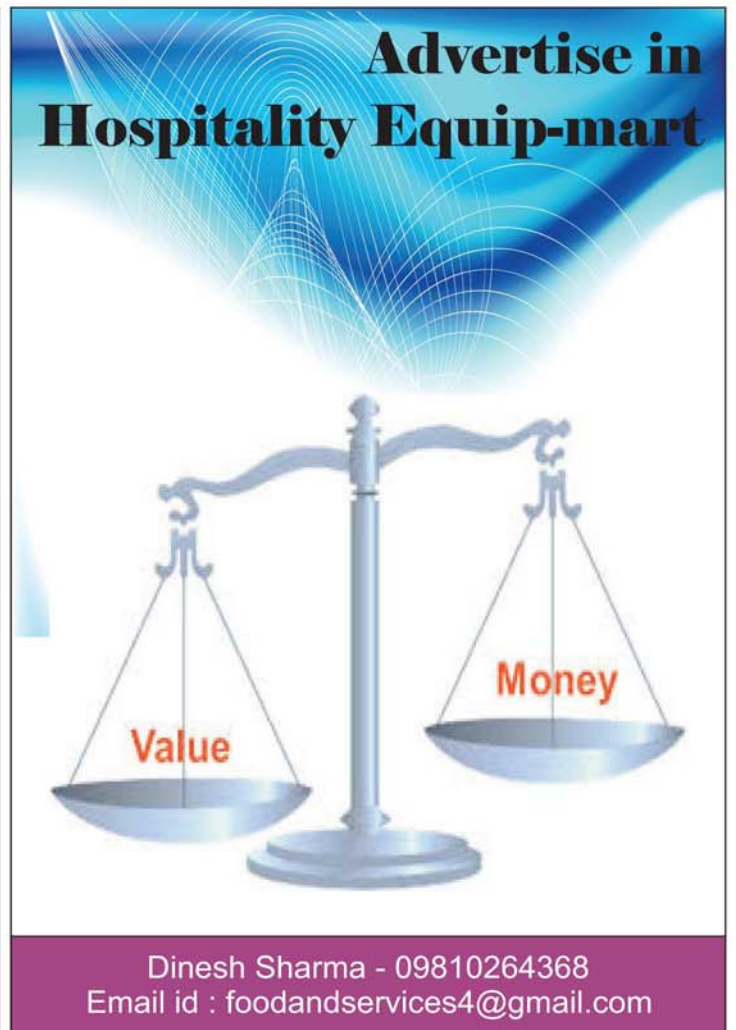
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Confecting toothsome recipes

In a tête-à-tête with FoodService India, celebrity chef Vicky Ratnani opens up on his cooking preferences, culinary expeditions, and the many innovations and skills with which he has painted his culinary canvas. During the course of the chat, Ratnani also talks of the emerging trends and challenges that any modern day chefprenneur should be au courant with.



Vicky Ratnani



What do you consider the most distinguishing features of a successful chef? What are your best achievements?

A chef must be creative, dedicated, honest, open minded and crazy. By far one of my biggest achievements was working as the first Indian Executive Chef of the largest ocean liner in the world for a British company.

Which culinary styles have influenced your career?

Contemporary and progressive culinary styles have certainly influenced my way of cooking. Apart from that, I also love the flavours of the countries in the Mediterranean, Middle East & South America.

Who have been your career mentors and which chefs do you admire the most?

While I was in college, chef Vernon Coelho motivated and pushed me hard and inspired me to be a go getter.

I am a great admirer of chef Thomas Keller for creating one of the best restaurants in the world 'The French Laundry'. Then there is chef Tetsuya Wakuda, who gave Australia a whole new Aussie inspired Japanese cuisine with Nobu, the world's most recognized Japanese restaurant, known for its innovative "New Style" Japanese cuisine, which was launched its Australia in 2007.

Another chef that I widely admire is chef Virgilio Martinez from Central, in Lima, Peru, which is the fourth-best restaurant in the world for using native produce from the Andes and the Amazon in a magnificent way.

How would you describe your approach to cooking and the foodservice business?

I think my approach to cooking can be described as being progressive, purist and real.

Which are your signature recipes and cuisines?

Some of my signature recipes are masala chai poached chicken breast, Calamari frites and double espresso BBQ braised pork belly skewers.

What is food service innovation in your opinion?

Food service innovation is all about knowing the

product and the produce well. An easy accessibility to products and having a good team that is passionate and willing to make a difference to the food operations is a vital ingredient to ensuring a successful food service operation.

What is your opinion about the future of Internet first restaurants and virtual kitchens that sprang up at a fast and furious pace until recently but now find themselves in an existential crisis?

I think virtual restaurants have a great scope and future provided that the product is really good and well put together. The food has to be bang on in all aspects. This was the missing link in those virtual restaurants that closed down. Besides the brand and logo, these restaurants had no previous credentials or reputation to speak of that could help attract customers. There was no tangibility and no past record to inspire consumer confidence.

Which are the important areas and functions of social and digital media that F&B operators should focus on?

F&B establishments should identify and reach out to the correct target group on the right social media platform. The marketing and packaging should be appealing to the target group. Maintaining a good regularity – when it comes to time, place and content – is also very important.

Which aspects of social media work best for F&B operators and which social media platforms are perfect for reaching out to target customers?

Nowadays most foodservice operators have a sizeable budget for social media. There are also some operators that don't do much on this front as the product speaks for itself. In my opinion, social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Zomato, Trip Advisor, Wow Tables, Eazy Diner are very handy tools for promoting and marketing your brand and products to your target audience.

What does the process of menu development entail and what is your recommended approach to doing it?

I won't call it a process. I would prefer calling it 'menu engineering'. It involves keeping a close

My menus have more vegetarian options than non-vegetarian and I enjoy giving special treatment to vegetables and letting them take centre stage.





In food preparation and service, specialised equipment and gadgets create a wow effect. Food apps and restaurant booking apps do contribute to the sales and profitability of the restaurant.

watch on a few factors – like looking at the type of guests at the outlet, the quality of raw materials and other considerations like seasonality of the dishes, cost factor and the skills set of your team. Menu engineering is also about striking the right balance of taste, colour, flavour, price points, etc, all of which makes menu development less complicated and a simple task.

Please offer us some examples of innovative F&B ideas that you have implemented?

Guests are looking for a lot of innovation and choice towards vegetarian and vegan diets. My menus have more vegetarian options than non-vegetarian and I enjoy giving special treatment to vegetables and letting them take centre stage. Another F&B innovation that I am inclined to talk of is the use of ancient grains like millet, amaranth, barley and broken wheat, which are seen in trendy menus today. Cooking techniques such as cooking on charcoal, sous vide, smoking, brining, pickling are the other big features on my menus.

What is your opinion about the evolving demands of the foodservice industry and how is it leading to food manufacturers to tweak and customise their offerings for HoReCa sector?

Manufacturers, importers and traders are now working closely with chefs and food service professionals. The synergy is increasing and at the same time chefs are going out of the way to procure new, rare and exotic ingredients. Not only



are they looking for a different produce but also for unique crockery, cutlery and flatware.

Tell us about the ingredients that have seen a dramatic rise in popularity or are witnessing a growing demand in the HoReCa sector?

Vegan recipes – gluten-free desserts, quinoa, buckwheat, millets, organic food, microgreens and sprouts, craft beer, artisanal coffee and modern mixology – are witnessing a growing surge in demand and popularity.

How would you describe the part that technology has come to play in the foodservice business?

In food preparation and service, specialised equipment and gadgets create a wow effect. Food apps and restaurant booking apps do contribute to the sales and profitability of the restaurant. Similarly, videography and photography help in quick brand positioning.

What are your observations about the evolution and developments in fine dining, smart/casual dining in India? Which are the new concepts that will upend the existing conventions?

The white table clothes and white glove service has disappeared. Price points have become flexible. Concept has overtaken food. Concepts like 'Farm to table produce' and 'Root to leaf cooking' have gained interest and demand.

Any opinion as to why, despite Indian food being popular in many countries, no Indian QSR has been able to go beyond twenty or so restaurants whereas foreign QSRs spawn thousands of outlets all over the world?

I feel the popularity of Indian food is limited to some big cities in Asia and the US. Indian food in a lot of places is perceived to be spicy and generalised as a curry. Apart from that, the skill sets available abroad for making Indian cuisines are not easily available and are very different from the actual requirements.

What are some of the biggest challenges that chefs face today in making their outlets stand out as an independent star attraction?

Inconsistent supply of good quality produce, escalating labour costs, import laws for ingredients, pressure from investors and owners and high rental costs are some of the challenges that a modern day chef has to cope with in the quest of raising the profile of his establishment. ●●

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Tell us about your entrepreneurial journey in the foodservice business and the milestones achieved so far.

It has been a wonderful journey, which began in 2000. Now 16 years later, Ohri's operate 25 restaurants and all of them with different themes. Be its 100 Degrees, 1857, 70MM, Ohri's Boulder Hills, De Thali, Cafe Loop, Chowpatti, or for that matter any of Ohri's other restaurants, all of them offer a sumptuous fine dining experience. In the course of this journey that holds many experiences, our restaurants have received numerous awards and widespread recognition.

What kind of a food person are you? What would you ascribe as the key strengths of your industry?

That's a tricky one to answer. You should have asked what kind of a 'food person' I am not! I am a food lover at heart and anything which is cooked with love and soul, I am in for it. I always thrive to get the best out of the culinary team by pushing them to deliver something out of the ordinary with great flavour bursting in the mouth. My key strength is knowing what my guests are looking for and delivering it before they ask. Our success story in Hyderabad aptly proves it.

What are your favourite cuisines?

Pan Asian and western comfort food.

What did it take to establish your brand in the fine dining space?

For me Fine Dining is a very intense thing to be in. It requires lot of study and hard work by the team, and that's where I think we have been able to play our game right – be it the ambience, furniture, uniforms, serve ware to food, R & D... every one of these aspects has been done in detail. For instance, when a guest comes to our restaurant, say, 'Tansen' in Hyderabad, he or she gets to feel the difference immediately. All these minute details have enabled us to create a niche for Ohri's in the Fine Dining arena.

So how would you describe the USP of Ohri's group, which makes it stand apart.

Happy Dining! This is our motto and the USP. It's never a boring or sad day at Ohri's. We make dining a happy experience and strive to delight each guest.

Happy Dining in the city of Nawabs

by Ajuli Tulsyan



Amar Ohri

More than three decades old, the Ohri's group of restaurants has introduced a myriad of theme-based restaurants in Hyderabad, the city of Nawabs. Innovative themes like dining with dummies of actors or sitting in a prototypal auto-rickshaw to dig into scrumptious delicacies or getting a jungle feel while sipping drinks are just some hallmarks of dining at any of Ohri's restaurants. Ohri's culinary legacy was the vision of Ravi Ohri, who laid the foundation of a unique brand in the foodservice industry. Ravi Ohri was succeeded by his son Amar Ohri, who is currently the Executive Director of Ohri's. An MBA from Johnson and Wales University, he spoke to FoodService India about his entrepreneurial journey and success story.

Food, service, ambience...all are important to a restaurant business. What's your take?

All the three factors mentioned are very important. People today are well travelled; they have seen the world and they know all about food. For me, the dining experience starts from the moment a guest enters the restaurant till the time he leaves the premises. What touches the hearts of people more is the personalised service, which makes them come back again and again.

How frequently do you change recipes in the various outlets?

Our menu changes almost every year, and that gives variety to our patrons.

In your opinion, what is a decent profit margin for a restaurant business?

A decent profit margin is 20-25 per cent of the revenue.



Tell us about some innovative F&B ideas that you have implemented.

Oh so many! Among the many initiatives and innovations that we have made include: the very first Hyderabad's grill restaurant with live table-top grilling, the first sizzlers restaurant in the city with an interesting cowboy theme, the largest buffet restaurant of the city, first Persian themed restaurant, live Sufi music every day, innovative ice creams such as Guntur Chilli, Nolan Gur, etc. The list goes on.

How do you look at the evolution of fine dining over the years?

Industry wise, the concept of fine dining has, kind of, diluted. Any place with a good ambience and decent food is now considered good for fine dining. The classical approach to fine dining is diminishing in new age India.

What do you think of the future of food industry in India and how do you see it evolving?

Casual dining holds a lot of promise and will rapidly bloom in the future. No frills dining, value pricing with innovative offerings will find many takers.

Is there a shift towards micro cuisines/local flavours as opposed to regional cuisine?

Not largely. The popular cuisines still dominate and micro cuisines are still largely undiscovered and unorganised.

Which have been the popular flavours at your outlets?

For me, creativity is the flavour of all times. I spend a lot of time with my chefs brainstorming about different combinations, R&D, and try to get some unusual unthinkable flavours. For instance, our Guntur Chilli ice-cream (Sahibs) is the talk of the town currently.

At your restaurants, how do you address quality control concerns supply chain issues?

As we speak, my team is working on a state-of-the-art central commissary, which will be able to sustain the demand of various outlets for the next 10+ years. This will help in achieving more quality consistency in food, and give us a better control over quality and cost. Not to forget, it will also be HACCP certified, thus giving more assurance to our patrons about everything they eat in Ohri's, where food is prepared under utmost hygiene guidelines.

What are the 'mindful dining' measures (sustainability, reduced food waste etc) that you have introduced and to what extent has it helped cut costs (before & after)?

We hoteliers have to realise that what we throw into the bin, without thinking for a minute, takes a minimum of 1-5 months to grow in the fields where our farmers put their work and sweat. We,

What touches the hearts of people more is the personalised service, which makes them come back again and again.

We, as an organisation, are implementing processes and systems to reduce food wastage to a bare minimum. At the same time, we are also planning to use our daily food waste to be converted into biogas – thus reducing our carbon footprint.



as an organisation, are implementing processes and systems to reduce food wastage to a bare minimum. At the same time, we are also planning to use our daily food waste to be converted into biogas – thus reducing our carbon footprint, using sustainable fuel for cooking, and producing organic manure, which can be given free to the local farmers. This will result in better cost with better profits. In this process, we have been able to control our overall food cost by three per cent in the last six months and eyeing for higher savings in the future.

What do you consider as the biggest challenge in your professional arena?

As an industry we are facing an acute shortage of skilled and trained manpower. And that's the biggest challenge. Because for me, my people make the organisation and they make the most integral part. I am observing a decline in the number of students who are willing to join the industry after their Hotel Management. I am closely associated with IHM and so is my corporate chef. We encourage students to join the industry. I am also planning to adopt a classroom in IHM Hyderabad and remodel it as an Ohri's restaurant so as to give the students a real feel of a foodservice outlet.

What do you look for in your business partners?

Choosing the right business partner is very crucial as it can either make or break the business. I also look at my vendors as my business partners. I am very particular about work ethics and professionalism. At the same time I believe in transparency. If all this is in place and the wave length matches, voila you get what you were looking for – a right business partner!

What are your plans for expansion, innovation and more?

We are continuously innovating – be it with food or new concepts or brands – and this is going to fuel our expansion plan, which is to have a pan-India presence in the next five years with 100 restaurants dedicated to creating 'Happy dining'! ●●

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Concept driven gastro-pubs are the new trendsetters

Swadeep Popli, CEO & Founder, The Chatter House, spoke to Food Service India magazine on how the gastro-pub culture in India is going through a whirlwind phase, and what it takes to survive and prosper amidst frenetic competition



Swadeep Popli

Tell us about The Chatter House, its format, size and how many outlets are you operating currently under this brand?

The Chatter House is a perfect getaway from the mundane flow of life. It brings alive the very essence of the pub culture made famous by the typical pubs of Europe, by offering a place to connect with friends, have conversations along with awesome food and drinks, in an ambience that lets you unwind.

In spite of its European influence, when it comes to food we serve a variety of cuisines from European, fusion to Indian. Currently we have two outlets – one at Epicuria Nehru Place and the other one at Khan Market. Very soon we are coming up with new outlets in Aerocity and Connaught Place in New Delhi and at a couple of locations in Mumbai as well.

Today, diners are looking for out-of-the box concepts and something that breaks the daily monotony of home dining. How does The Chatter House fit into this scheme of things .

The Chatter House is a gastro-pub, where we curate our food with much detail and passion as we devote to our drinks. Speaking of the gastronomic experience here, comfort and good food has been our key to success. Besides, we offer

a variety of culinary delights from Europe, Italy and, of course, India.

The emphasis is on fresh and high quality ingredients from the best of suppliers. We try and create things in-house as much as possible. We bake our own breads, most of our sauces are made in-house with carefully selected spices and flavours. Besides, frozen food is avoided as much as possible to ensure excellent food quality and guest satisfaction. Our F&B team is headed by expert professionals in the kitchen – the best in the industry with vast experience in India and abroad.

Our prime focus, while planning the entire menu, has been on comfort, association, aspiration for quality and regional flavours so as to provide an indulgent culinary experience. We wanted to break the monotony of a normal casual pub, so we curate our food listings seasonally and our menu changes every three months.

Spread across 2,500 sq. ft. of space, both our outlets have different themes. The one at Nehru Place is a Victorian era themed pub with classic chandeliers, wooden accents, old world flooring, brick wall finishes, plush comfortable seating, etc. Whereas the one at Khan Market is a typical Irish themed pub with tan leather and dark wood interiors covered with iron and bricks, Irish rock bands' music and the Irish music wall art. We have a 20th century piano sourced from London and the theme is typically based around Irish music. Keeping the guest's convenience in mind, we have a variety of seating options in both our outlets. We also have al fresco seating with an open format, wood fire oven at Epicuria and a full glass house smoking terrace area at Khan Market.

Which are those cutting edge concepts and innovations and bold experiments that you feel are truly unique to your establishment?

I feel we are the only place in Delhi that has been playing 100 per cent classic rock and retro music for more than three years now, and we will continue doing that.

That apart, we work very hard towards introducing new dishes and drinks to our menu by indulging in a lot of R&D.



We don't believe in gimmicks and have always stuck to our core strength, with a 100 per cent focus on the quality of our food, beverages and service. While this may not sound cutting edge, a lot of detailing has been done to give an unparalleled guest experience – from the acoustics to the level of lighting during the day and evenings to the highly engineered seating to give maximum comfort and from the cutlery, crockery to our glassware. Every material has been carefully selected and designed to perfection.

Where do you think the future of pubs lies – will it belong to gastro bars or fun and molecular bars? Which will be the most interesting development to watch out for this year?

The future will definitely belong to gastro-bars. For who doesn't want great food to go along with the drinks? People are not always comfortable with experiments. It's always fun to experience something different but in the end people look for a substantial product and not a gimmick. Although a few places have become very popular with the focus only on fusion and molecular gastronomy, the market has enough space to accommodate everyone and people don't mind something different, even though it may be gimmicky.

What is your opinion about the growth outlook and market potential for restaurant cum bars. What do you feel are the prerequisites for success in this segment?

Bars have existed since eternity and hopefully they shall continue to do so. Having said that, the market in Delhi-NCR has been growing at more than 50 per cent growth rate over the past couple of years. As per the latest Grant Thornton India report, bars & pubs will grow at a very healthy rate of more than 11 per cent in 2017. The potential is immense – on average an Indian eats out two times in a month, whereas people in Singapore eat out 40 times per month. So even a small change in this number will have a huge impact on growth.

The success rate for standalone restaurants is below 10 per cent, i.e., only 1 in 10 restaurants

survive while nine shut down within two years, so it is pretty tough to sustain. However, I would attribute our success to our consistency in the quality of food and service, among other equally important factors like location, innovation and good marketing. We are also looking at marketing through various platforms, as it is now becoming increasingly important to stand out from the crowd.

How are you leveraging technology to streamline and expand your infrastructure bandwidth?

We are currently experiencing rapid changes in the world of technology. It changed the entire structure of doing business in a lot of industries including the F&B industry. From table reservations to home delivery, from customer feedbacks to reviews, everything is digitized today. Marketing is almost exclusively digital these days as targeting different or niche audiences for the brand has become very easy and effective with Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google campaigns etc.) A lot of our back-end processes like ordering supplies, inventory management, payroll, analytics, etc, employs pure technology.

Who are your sourcing partners and what is your sourcing strategy? Are you in favour of local procurement or sourcing from far-off shores?

We are in favour of local procurement as much as we can because it helps us in making our food and cocktails as fresh as possible. We do have to source imported ingredients as well and it is unavoidable as some varieties of vegetables, fruits and cured meats are not produced in India.

How much of your earnings is spent back as investment to the business. Which are the priority areas of such investment?

Most of our earnings is spent back for the development of our brand as we continue to hone our skills and make ourselves better. Our aim is to become the number one gastro pub in the country. The priority areas of such investment is R&D and improving our services, while a major chunk is reserved for future growth activities. ●●

The success rate for standalone restaurants is below 10%, i.e., only one in 10 restaurants survive while nine shut down within two years, so it is pretty tough to sustain



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To be or not to be

FoodService India spoke to industry leaders and restaurateurs to understand their perspective on the Government's recommendation to waive off service charge and the widespread public reactions to it.



Riyaz Amlani



Priyank Sukhija



Umang Tewari



Inderjeet Singh Banga



Varun Puri

Your take on the recommendation to make service charge optional?

Riyaz Amlani, President, NRAI, and CEO and MD, Impresario Entertainment & Hospitality Pvt. Ltd

Levying service charge is a globally accepted practice in the hospitality industry. Depending on which restaurant you go to, 40–60 per cent of staff's monthly take-home comes from service charge. The fact is that it is collected above board, and it is collected for the staff: 100 per cent of the money is given to the staff, or is used for staff welfare activities. By waiving it off, you're actually taking away about 40–60 per cent of that poor guy's take-home, and that is really, really not fair.

Priyank Sukhija, Restaurateur and owner of outlets like Lord of the Drinks, Tamasha, The Flying Saucer Café, Warehouse Café, etc

The decision of the Department of Consumer Affairs to make the levy of service charge optional or discretionary will affect employment. Service charge is not a way for us to earn money but it's for the staff welfare and motivation. Leaving it on customer discretion, in my opinion, is not right. However, I believe customer is the boss and we will work out our way for staff betterment. There will be absolutely no effect on the service to customers, as we have always trained our staff to work with dedication. We make sure to give our staff enough perks to keep them happy. However, something 'more' is always welcome.

Umang Tewari, Founder of Big Fish Ventures that owns The Junkyard Café, Garam Dharam, Vault Café and more

Big Fish Ventures has already removed service charge from all the restaurants under its umbrella as we do not believe in over-burdening our consumers. The customer is the king for us and we ensure that we provide them the best service without charging a single extra penny. So, we have not been affected by the Government's decision to make service charge optional. There are many places like the United States and Hong Kong that don't charge service tax. It is the hard work of the personnel in the F & B industry that should be valued.

Inderjeet Singh Banga, Restaurateur and owner of Prankster & Pirates of Grill

It is a double edged sword – the Government's advisory to make service tax optional. The restaurants do not keep the service charge collection in their pocket. Instead, the amount collected is divided among the staff, which in turn motivates them to work harder. However, it is a good decision from the perspective of the consumer. If they are not satisfied by the services they can choose not pay the service charge.

Varun Puri, Restaurateur

This move will have multiple ramifications on the industry. First, it will lead to unnecessary chaos and disputes during the billing. Who's going to decide why a guest shouldn't be billed the service charge. Now let's come to the other part, which is that it will certainly affect the operating cost of the restaurants. Once staff members are used to getting a certain sum during the month, settling for anything less is not going to suit him. Restaurants will have to compensate for the loss.



What do you make of the consumers welcoming the announcement?

Riyaz Amlani: The circular of the government has created unnecessary confusion amongst the public regarding the levy of service charge. I would like to mention that levy of service charge is a totally legal process which has been recognized / upheld by various judicial pronouncements including the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. Service charge ensures that everybody works as a big unit; it is not that one guy is running behind a big tipper, but rather everybody is invested in the restaurant doing well. It works for the restaurant, it works for the staff, and it works for the people because the prices have been kept low and reasonable. Waiving it off will eventually lead to an increase in the menu prices.

Umang Tiwari: I believe customers look for the best of quality service. If they are receiving that they will happily give away tips and pay service charge. I think the staff will realise that ultimately it's the customer who is the boss and that they should always strive to offer better services. In the long run, this kind of attitude will improve the standards of Indian Hospitality sector leading to better service, better relations between client and staff, and a better yardstick for everyone to judge our service standards. However, I understand that the staff might feel de-motivated if service charge is not paid as the amount goes to the pool for staff betterment. But we will lay down more motivational and organised ways to keep the spirits of our staff high.

Inderjeet Singh Banga: The industry is a very dynamic one and issues like these, which were always discussed at the backbench, are now in the open. This means that the fly-by-night operators will have a tough time and companies build on the right value system will succeed. The growth potential has always been huge for those restaurants that keep guests at the forefront. Moves like these will reinforce the view that 'Guest is God' and only the ones in sync with this notion will continue to grow and thrive.

What measures can you suggest to keep the cost of dining reasonable for consumers for them to come and dine more often?

Riyaz Amlani: The restaurant industry in India is the most licensed and taxed sector. Real estate costs and food inflation are a major cause for the increased dining costs. In order to unleash the true potential of this promising industry, there is a need for the government to ease the licensing norms and reduce the tax for dining out to become more affordable for the consumer.

Won't it encourage people to dine out more often if service charge is removed?

Varun Puri: What customers paid as service charge will now fall upon the company to pick the tab by way of a salary hike. I am not sure if this will benefit the Indian Food industry but it will certainly not help in keeping costs low and making dining out more affordable. As they say, "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch". Now the restaurant staff will have to work even harder to earn service charge. When service charge was mandatory, there might have been a few instances when staff were non-chalant about attending to the needs of guests. On the other hand, there has been a misinformed propaganda that the service charge was benefiting restaurant owners. This money belongs to the staff who work at odd hours, and on weekends and festivals. This is a hard working sector and one of the biggest employment providers in the country and definitely deserves some incentives. ••



How Online Reviews Can Take Your Restaurant to **the Next Level**



The world of online reputation management is tough. It can make even the most toughened restaurant owner sweat. Reviews definitely give the opportunity to a restaurant to truly learn. With the help of social media, restaurants can identify where they need to tinker with and adjust their service. It gives them the opportunity to address customer concerns, and use the feedback to continue building an even better restaurant.

by Rohan Jaina

Today, diners are more engrossed on their mobile phones even when they are having food in a restaurant. Even when dining, they are either clicking pictures or fiddling with their phone randomly. However, we interpret this behaviour, they are readily available to give their feedback about the restaurant then and there on various online platforms, which are just a click or tap away. This gathering trend is not taken lightly by foodservice operators. In fact, it's time for restaurant managers to come to speed and match the emerging dining trends and customers' preferences. In short, a manager should be a quick responder. Therefore, getting the customer feedback for analysing internally by the food outlet and working on it to improve quality standards has become vital, along with the changes in the menu, interiors of the restaurant and its other services alterations. The restaurant owner should be active in responding to online reviews.

But the world of online reputation management is tough. It can make even the most toughened restaurant owner sweat. Reviews definitely give the opportunity to a restaurant to truly learn. With



the help of social media, restaurants can identify where they need to tinker with and adjust their service. It gives them the opportunity to address customer concerns, and use the feedback to continue building an even better restaurant.

It is essential that restaurateurs are empowered to make adaptations with the changing trends and preferences. With this approach, a restaurant can become much more intuitive to its guests' needs and at the same time be able to truly control the clientele. The paper comment card is still slipped in with every bill but gone are those days when reviews were done quietly. With social media, guests can not only make it known if their dining experience was good or bad but broadcast their reviews to the public at large.

The key to fully embracing online reviews is by creating an advance practice for executing changes in-house. There is no time to read a review and then wait for months to start implementing a change. Many restaurants believe in empowering their employees so as to be able to make adjustments on the spot. Of course, sometimes it is a difficult task for many chefs, if more responses are negative about the dish. The chef spends hours, days and maybe even months developing it and later on it comes to be criticised. The fact of the matter is that guests who have had an unpleasant experience are much more active in writing about it than those who have had a good experience. That's because a good experience should be the norm and is expected when someone visits your restaurant. Additionally, that doesn't mean that negative reviews should or can be automatically disregarded as mere rant. Each and every customer review should be taken seriously and given a thoughtful and constructive response. When reading reviews, it is of vital importance to note common trends in the comments and take action steps to address them.

Using social media platform

One can choose the social media platform that gets the most traffic. One can have customers post their

favourite dish or they can share their experience at the restaurant. The customers can express in detail about the food they had eaten and relished and they can be encouraged to share the experience among their friends as well. Restaurateurs can also host contests to engage their customers and thank them for their support. You can also make use of this contest as a way to get more traffic on site.

Highlight the favorite dish

If any food item receives best reviews, consider elevating it to a signature dish of the restaurant and name it as chef's special. If customers crave about a special, then try to consider making it a permanent menu item. The reviews posted online will make others read about it and they will surely like to visit the restaurant.

Respond to customer feedback

It is of vital importance to acknowledge the customers' review without taking it personally and the result will be tremendous. Make it mandatory to respond to each feedback where customers post their reviews either it is good or bad, it is important to establish yourself as a proactive business owner. The fact that customers took the time out to review the restaurant means that their experiences meant something to them. Now, the way you respond to these reviews is also important. Be respectful and customers will automatically give the respect. Try to accept negative reviews to make business much better.

Check out the sites

Identify which sites are most relevant and on which site your target customers are active. Try to be active on all platforms. Do check to see if those sites feature your region.

Serve presentable food

Social media is dominated by people telling their friends where they've eaten by posting photos of their food. The more eye-catching the food, the more likely their friends will be impressed and want to visit the restaurant. The food served should be presentable so that if someone sees it they also would like to go for it. This will itself generate good reviews about the food.

Get reviews on a continuous basis

It's best to get reviews in a natural way without asking the customers to submit them. At the same time, make getting online reviews a part of the ongoing business process. Make sure to pamper each customer and ask them about the food they ordered. They should feel happy when they leave the restaurant. ●●

The key to fully embracing online reviews is by creating an advance practice for executing changes in-house. There is no time to read a review and then wait for months to start implementing a change.



The writer is owner & chef of Holy Smoke restaurant, Gurgaon



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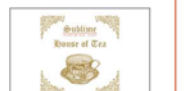










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Responsible Procurement

by Pankaj Sharma

Responsible procurement or sustainable / responsible purchasing is a process by which environmental, social and ethical considerations are taken into account when making a purchasing decision.



Looking beyond the traditional parameters of price, quality, functionality and availability, responsible procurement involves choosing products and services that have a lesser or reduced impact on human health, the environment and society when compared with competing items that serve the same purpose.

One of the principles of responsible procurement is life-cycle costing. It is a technique that establishes the total costs of purchasing a product or service, from 'cradle to grave', by asking questions relating to each stage of its life cycle.

It considers the following:

- Whether a purchase is necessary at all
- Of what the products are made of
- Under what conditions they have been made
- How far they have travelled
- Their packaging components
- How they will be used
- How they will be disposed of

Purchasing decisions can have significant environmental and social impacts, particularly for the tourism and hospitality sectors, which often find themselves under pressure to import large numbers of goods, including food from distant countries to cater to guests' demands.

Hospitality procurement managers should be considering whole life costs when making decisions about what they purchase, whether buying food for their restaurants, furniture for guestrooms, amenities for the spa or outsourcing laundry services. By doing so they will also be helping to influence suppliers' and even consumers' behavior.

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One of the principles of responsible procurement is life-cycle costing. It is a technique that establishes the total costs of purchasing a product or service, from "cradle to grave", by asking questions relating to each stage of its life cycle.

Benefits of responsible procurement

A hotel with a responsible procurement policy can enjoy significant commercial, environmental and social benefits:

Cost savings: When looking at items through their whole life span, products that are more expensive initially can produce savings when they are assessed throughout their lifecycle. Potential procurement cost savings can be created through reduced consumption, longer term pay-back periods or purchasing more efficient and durable products.

Reputation management: Selecting sustainable goods and services from responsible suppliers will enhance the company reputation, increase customer loyalty and attract new customers. Association with a supplier with poor environmental, social and ethical record can pose a significant reputational risk to a business. In 1996, for example, Nike suffered damaging boycotts by consumers after the company was publicly accused of doing business with overseas suppliers employing child labour. In 1998, Nike announced significant measures to improve working conditions at supplier factories.

Improved access to capital: Institutional investors and lenders are looking to a company's social, environmental and governance performance. Hotels that practise responsible procurement will benefit from easier access to capital.

Tax breaks and credits: Businesses can take advantage of government financial incentives for investing energy-saving equipment. Many municipalities in Japan offer subsidies, including low-interest finance, for purchases of energy-efficient appliances while the US state of Pennsylvania offers small businesses energy-efficient grants for equipment that notably improves a company's energy efficiency. In the UK, the Carbon Trust's Enhance Capital Allowances scheme allows businesses to claim 100 percent first-year capital allowances on investments of qualifying energy-efficient equipment, from boilers to lighting and refrigeration systems.



Pankaj Sharma

Promotes innovation: It can encourage suppliers to invest in developing sustainable products, technologies and processes. EcoLab has worked closely with its client Marriott to come up with a low temperature water laundry system, the Aquanomic laundry system, that reduces water and energy consumption by up to 40%.

Good for staff engagement: By showing a genuine commitment to environmental and social issues, responsible procurement can play a contributing factor in attracting and retaining hotel staff as well as creating more highly motivated and productive employees. In *Managing Business Ethics* (2004), Linda Trevino and Katherine Nelson showed that when companies fulfil their employees' expectations about corporate social responsibility, they can achieve better work attitudes, greater productivity and decreased turnover rate.

Identify the people and resources accountable for the implementation of your policy, you will need to allocate responsibilities.

Environmental benefits: With key customers demanding sustainability improvements, suppliers can be encouraged to make their manufacturing processes and products more environmentally friendly in terms of sourcing "green" raw materials, using less packaging, designing the products to be more energy efficient and consume less water, etc. To achieve this, hotels should be working to engage suppliers so they know and understand your objectives.

Social benefits: Making decisions beyond the traditional economic parameters is a way of incorporating appropriate safeguards and checks to avoid abuses and inadvertent infringements on key social issues, such as labour and human rights and health and safety. By requiring more goods and services that are locally sourced, hotels can also support local job creation and other economic opportunities and build a strong relationship with the community. ••



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Rohan Jetley

The NRAI unifies restaurants across the country: Rohan Jetley

Modern and easy going, Rohan Jetley represents the new class of entrepreneurs who combine corporate governance with business attitude to provide a style that has the best of both traditional and modern approach to business. With his clear-cut vision, Rohan Jetley, CEO, TGIF, shares insights on his business and the foodservice industry.

How has your journey been with the NRAI? How do you plan to strengthen it further?

The NRAI today is both symbolically and functionally the most credible and legitimate organization which unifies restaurants across the country and brings them on one platform. This platform is used for discussion and debate to facilitate change for the better. There is no substitute for an organization of this nature in this country.

My interest in the NRAI has been reinforced in the recent months due to a likeminded President- Riyaz Amlani who encompasses two traits which I find compelling. These traits are:

- A young, modern and dynamic approach to the restaurant industry- in terms of his ideology; and
- His ability to translate that ideology and creativity into reality through tenacious execution of each initiative that he is involved in. By supporting him in his endeavours I feel I am doing my part in strengthening the organisation.

Tell us about TGIF. What are your expansion plans?

TGI Fridays started in 1996, pioneering casual dining into India. Before we came on the scene, F&B formats consisted of:

- Extremely high end fine dining with a formal atmosphere attracting a high price point.
- The other was a very casual format that compromised on its product quality.

We were the first format that integrated a premium product into a casual atmosphere. TGI Fridays product

offerings consists of innovative American cuisine with a wide variety of cocktails and a vibrant bar atmosphere.

TGI Fridays in India is a JV with Fridays international with their direct equity participation. We are completely debt free company with zero loans and no PE or other third party investment. All restaurants in India are company owned and operated and our development is financed through the internal accruals of the company. We conservatively and opportunistically develop 2-3 restaurants annually.

With the PBCL format growing in the industry, what is your strategy to keep up with the competition?

The strategy has always been and shall remain focused on core essentials of restaurant operations. We remain committed to consistently provide great quality food and drinks day in and day out time and again sprinkled with innovation done periodically to remain relevant.

What do you do to unwind yourself, to keep work-life balance?

I regularly practice ISHA yoga however I attribute the biggest stress buster to simply spending quality time with my beloved cocker spaniel- Sasha

One tip / advice you would like to offer to young entrepreneurs aspiring to enter the restaurant business?

I would like the young entrepreneurs to always remember Thomas Edison's famous dictum that "Strategy without execution is hallucination".



National Restaurant Association of India
Voice of the Indian Restaurant Industry

NRAI training seminar on decoding GST for restaurant industry



The Goods and Services Tax ('GST') regime is set to replace multiple State and Central levies with a single tax regime. Introduction of GST would provide a platform to both – Government and industry, for structured approach and productive focus on business growth contrary to ambiguous and cost inefficient and compliance burdened one. GST implementation would need planned and meticulous approach by industries including F&B sector, in which, the challenges under indirect tax regime are at its peak. Introduction of GST would provide an opportunity to revamp the business model to enable management to focus on core business activities. While approach for implementation of GST

could differ from industry-to-industry and also between entities within same sector, the challenges and impact of GST on F&B sector would be relevant to highlight providing ease in GST implementation perspective.

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*For more details and registration
log on to: nrai.org/GST/ or write to info@nrai.org*

Standards for reuse of oil in restaurants

The Association has been advocating with FSSAI for formulating standards for reuse of oil in restaurants. In the recent past, there had been instances of the authorities failing samples of used oil picked up from restaurants. After repeated follow

ups, this is to inform members that FSSAI is now in the process of formulating guidelines on the subject. In the interim, the department has advised the enforcement authorities in states to avoid testing of used edible oils against the standards of fresh edible oils. ●●

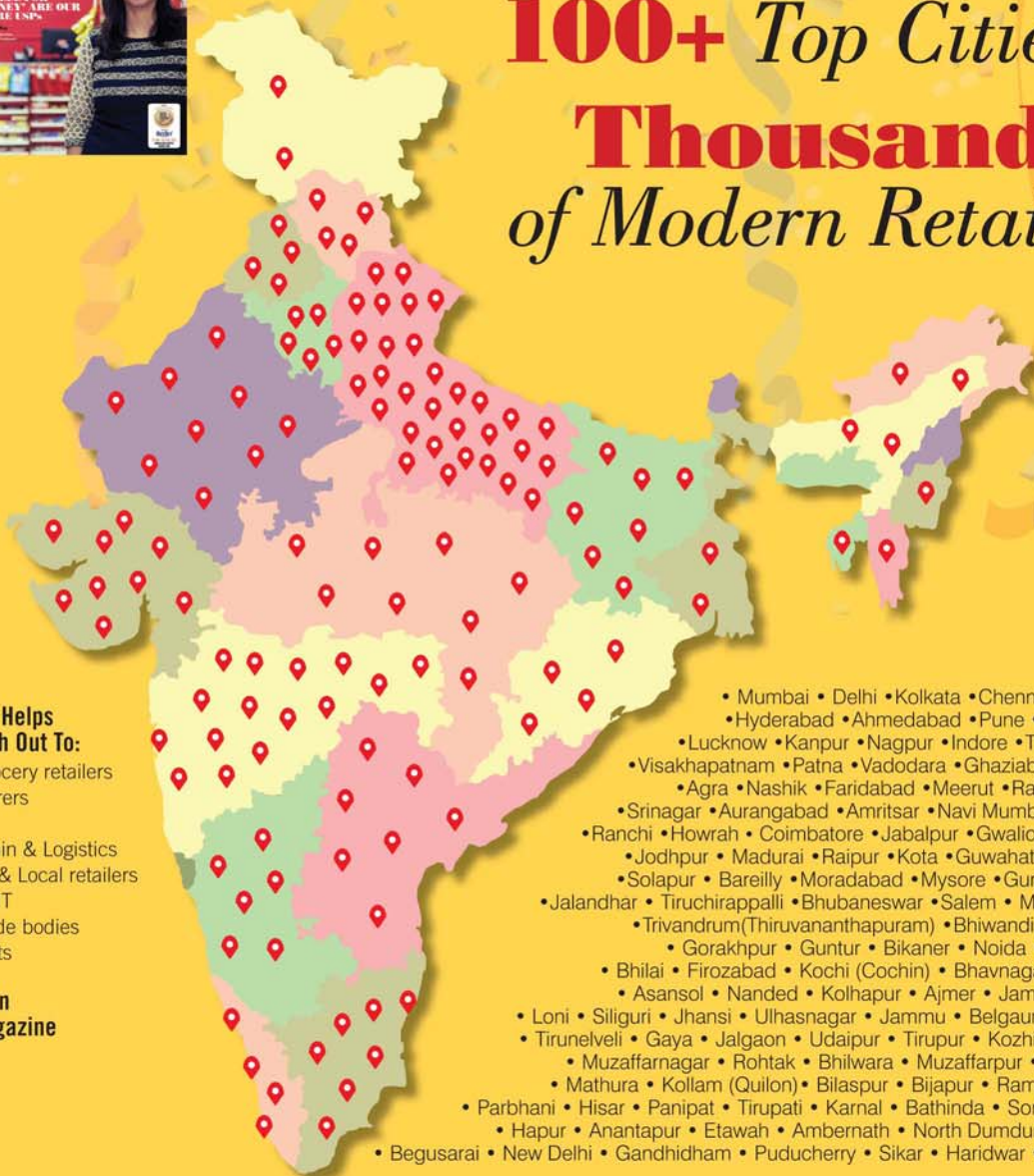
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